

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-01 CU-02

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 /053 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 360

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0288

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US

SUBJECT: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD

REFS: A) PANAMA 227; B) PANAMA 237; C) PANAMA 260;

D) PANAMA 278; E) STATE 4559

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ON THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 9 AND OUR REACTION THERETO--AS REPORTED IN REFS A, B, AND C-- I CALLED ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER TODAY AND DELIVERED PROTEST NOTE (TEXT IN REF D). HE EXPRESSED REGRET AND APOLOGIZED FOR THE FLAG-BURNING INCIDENTS. I ALSO CALLED HIS ATTENTION TO A SCURRILOUS ARTICLE IN TODAY'S CRITICA WHICH APPEARED UNDER HEADLINE: QUOTE SUBQUOTE GOVERNOR OF WHAT UNSUBQUOTE WANTED DEATH ON JANUARY 9 9 UNQUOTE. MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL CONTEMPT FOR ARTICLE OF THIS KIND. MINISTER SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER MY PROTEST CAREFULLY, WOULD CONSULT WITH SUPERIORS AND WOULD HAVE ANSWER FOR ME LATER THIS WEEK. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER OPENING GREETINGS, I TOLD BOYD I HAD OFFICIAL NOTE OF PROTEST CONCERNING THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 9. I GAVE HIM NOTE WHICH HE READ WITH CARE. HE TOLD ME HE CONFIDENTIAL

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PROFOUNDLY REGRETTED THE FLAG-BURNING OF THE 9TH. HE SAID THIS WAS AN ACTION THAT WAS DISTASTEFUL TO ANY THINKING PERSON. HE SAID THE FLAG WHICH SYMBOLIZED A NATION AND ITS PEOPLE SHOULD NEVER BE DESECRATED. HE ALSO AGREED WITH ME THAT THIS KIND OF INCIDENT ALWAYS CONTAINED THE SEED OF GRAVE CONFRONTATION AND POSSIBLE EXPLOSION. HE COMPLIMENTED THE RESTRAINT SHOWN BY THE

CANAL ZONE POLICE AND THE COOPERATION (SIC) BETWEEN THEM AND THE NATIONAL GUARD. I TOLD HIM I, TOO, FELT THE ZONE AUTHORITIES HAD ACTED WITH ADMIRABLE RESTRAINT AND THEREBY HAD PROBABLY PREVENTED MUCH MORE SERIOUS INCIDENT. I COULD NOT AGREE THAT THE GUARD HAD SHOWN SIMILAR RESPONSIBILITY. THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE PERMITTED STUDENTS TO ENTER THE ZONE AT ALL AND THEY CERTAINLY SHOULD HAVE PREVENTED FLAG BURNING.

3. I TOLD MINISTER IT APPEARED TO MY GOVERNMENT THAT THERE WAS A MAJOR INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN TALK OF COOPERATION AND JOINT EFFORTS TO SOLVE A MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM, ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE KIND OF IRRATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL OUTBURST THAT OCCURRED ON THE 9TH--WITH PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS STAND BY AND WATCHING. WE HAD TO WONDER WHICH WAS THE MAIN STREAM OF THINKING HERE. BOYD ASSURED ME THAT THE FLAG BURNING WAS THE ACTION OF A SMALL AND EMOTIONAL ELEMENT IN PANAMANIAN SOCIETY. HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT WANTED TO REACH A FAIR AND JUST SETTLEMENT OF THE CANAL ISSUE. THEY WERE EAGER TO REACH THIS GOAL AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. I TOLD HIM THAT IF THAT WERE TRUE THEY WERE CERTAINLY HARMING THEMSELVES AND OUR RELATIONS BY PERMITTING THIS KIND OF IRRESPONSIBLE ACTION TO TAKE PLACE. HE AGREED THAT EVENTS OF THIS KIND PLAYED INTO THE HANDS OF PANAMA'S ENEMIES AND TREATY OPPONENTS.

4. AT THIS POINT, I MENTIONED AN ARTICLE IN TODAY'S CRITICA WHICH ALLEGED THAT CZ GOVERNOR PARFITT WAS FURIOUS THAT CZ POLICE HAD NOT USED FORCE AGAINST THE

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STUDENTS WHO CARRIED OUT THE ZONE INCURSION ON THE 9TH. THE HEADLINE AND THE IMPLICATION OF THE WHOLE LIBELOUS PIECE WAS THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD BEEN SORRY THERE WAS NO BLOODSHED. I TOLD BOYD THAT THIS VICIOUS LIE WAS BENEATH CONTEMPT. I WAS SHOCKED THAT SUCH A PIECE OF GARBAGE COULD APPEAR IN A GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER. IT WOULD CERTAINLY EXACERBATE FEELINGS BETWEEN THE ZONE AND PANAMA. I TOLD THE MINISTER IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF THE NEWSPAPER WOULD PRINT A RETRACTION, PREFERABLY QUOTING SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL FLATLY DISCLAIMING THE ALLEGATIONS IN THE ARTICLE. HE SUGGESTED THAT I WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF CRITICA AND HE (BOYD) WOULD URGE THAT IT BE PRINTED. HE SAID HE HAD THE SAME REACTION AS I WHEN HE READ THE ARTICLE. IT WAS VERY DESTRUCTIVE. BUT HE HAD NO CLEAR ANSWER WHEN I URGED AGAIN THAT HE DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

5. I SAID GOODBYE AND THE MINISTER SAID HE WOULD HAVE AN ANSWER TO MY NOTE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THIRTY MINUTES AFTER MY CONVERSATION WITH HIM, I CALLED THE MINISTER BACK

TO PASS ALONG THE ESSENCE OF REF E REGARDING A POSSIBLE VISIT TO WASHINGTON. I TOLD HIM THE DATE MENTIONED WAS NOT CONVENIENT AND THAT I WOULD GET BACK TO HIM WHEN A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE ON AN APPRIATE TIME FOR SUCH A MEETING. I WANTED HIM TO MAKE A CONNECTION BETWEEN MY DEMARCHE AND THIS DELAY. I AM SURE HE DID SO. HE SAID HE WOULD WAIT TO HEAR FROM ME.

6. COMMENT: IT WAS CLEAR THAT BOYD REALIZED THAT OUR POSITION WAS THOROUGHLY JUSTIFIED THOUGH HE COULD NOT SAY SO IN SO MANY WORDS. HE DID EXPRESS REGRETS AND APOLOGIES FOR THE FLAG-BURNING. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT HE KNOWS--AND WORRIES ABOUT--THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS KIND OF IRRATIONAL ACTION BY SMALL NUMBERS OF WILD MEN AND THE IMPORTANT BUSINESS IN WHICH OUR TWO COUNTRIES ARE CURRENTLY ENGAGED. THE TROUBLE IS THAT BOYD DOESN'T RUN THE G-2. END COMMENT.
JORDEN
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